

Hi my name is _____ and this is the 8th principle minute. With the adoption of the 8th Principle, our congregation committed to dismantle racism, beginning within our walls.

This week we lost an American icon. Sidney Poitier was one of the top actors to appear on film. He was a ground breaker as an actor and as a director.

While it is great to acknowledge that he was the first Black person nominated for Best Actor and the first to win it in 1964, it would be another 38 years before Denzel Washington became the second. He was a trailblazer, for certain, but it is still difficult for others to follow in his footsteps.

Mr. Poitier's roles broke down stereotypes. He didn't accept the subservient roles that had been the sole presence of Black actors in American movies. Those roles allowed White America to see a successful Black man in an "untraditional" role.

Poitier rose to the heights of the movie industry through grace, poise, and skill. As with other BIPOC professionals, he succeeded by being better than his white counterparts; being equal to them would not have been enough to earn the awards he received. "The New York Times noted that Poitier was 'an ambassador to white America and a benign emblem of Black power'." Perhaps, being "benign" was necessary for him to break through, but wasn't being benign the role consigned to him by White society? Should it take a uniquely beautiful, soft-spoken and non-threatening individual to allow Whites in power to rise above prejudices?

We must celebrate the life of this great man. Let us honor him by continuing to fight for equality until the achievements of BIPOCs do not require a footnote to indicate how much more work was required because of their skin color.

Together we will continue this journey toward spiritual wholeness, build a beloved community, educate ourselves and discuss what it means to develop a culture of being accountably anti-racist. We will continue to look at our own practices, identity, and stories with a new lens to dismantle the racism in ourselves and our institutions.